

Key Points

The following is a brief and selective review of the central conclusions to be drawn from this survey.

- Senior Center services are heavily utilized, with 46.7% of all Amherst residents 50 or older having used Center services. Two-thirds of all residents over 70 and nearly 75% of all residents over 75 have used Center services.
- Medical services have been utilized by the largest number of people; more than 50% of all who have used any service have used a medical service. Relatively large percentages have also utilized the bus/van service, educational programs, fitness and exercise programs, financial counseling and dance/music events.
- The Center newsletter, The Senior Spirit, is read by more than 96% of Amherst's older population.
- Satisfaction rates among those who have utilized Center services are extraordinarily high, with well over 90% of users expressing satisfaction with their experiences in nearly all service areas.
- There is considerable demand for additional services, with approximately 45% of respondents saying they would be likely or very likely to use exercise machines if they were available. A large number and variety of other services were suggested and summarized in the text.
- Twenty-five percent of respondents serve as caregivers to another person. Percentages are highest among the youngest and the oldest respondents. The former group is probably caring for aged parents, while the latter group is more likely to be caring for spouses. About 40% of those giving care find it "difficult" or "very difficult" to do so.
- Forty-seven percent of those giving care are assisting persons with some degree of memory impairment, ranging from "mild" to "severe".
- While the majority of caregivers have the financial resources to afford the costs of care giving, one-quarter do not have sufficient money to meet their obligations.
- One-third of caregivers would utilize some form of adult daycare if it were available, at least on an occasional basis.
- Nearly one-fifth of all respondents stated they needed help with performing routine daily tasks, ranging from personal grooming to housework. This percentage rises to over 46% among those over 80.

- One-quarter of those needing help are not receiving the needed help. The majority of these people have the financial ability to pay for help, but apparently still can not secure the needed services.
- A significant number (35%) of those receiving help from a circle of friends and family doubt that such help will be forthcoming one year hence.
- The majority of Amherst's older residents have a socio-emotional network in place: 85% are either married or have other family members living nearby. However, 15% are neither married nor have family nearby.
- Contact with family members declines with age. Only 50% of those over 75 see family members daily.
- Among the non-married, 45% see family members once per month or less.
- The health and health habits of Amherst's older residents are generally good: more than 90% say they are in good or excellent health. most exercise on a regular basis, and very few smoke.
- While most respondents say they do not experience frequent feelings of sadness and loneliness, a standard indicator of depression, the percentage that do have such feelings rises with age. Twenty percent of respondents over 75 are likely suffering some degree of depression.
- Most Amherst residents over 50 are actively engaged in the labor force. Among those over 65, 30% are still employed. Despite continued employment, 20% of this group has household incomes of less than \$40,000, often much less.
- Among those over 65, there are no differences in household income between those still employed and those fully retired, suggesting that employment is critical for many to maintain income parity with their age peers.
- Most Amherst seniors plan to stay in Amherst on a long term basis. One implication is that there will be a fairly sharp increase in the number of older Amherst residents. There will likely be a 35% increase over the next ten years in the number of residents in the 70-80 year old age group.
- Many of Amherst's older residents, notwithstanding their general affluence, are experiencing considerable anxiety about their economic futures. Nearly one-third are particularly concerned about the rising cost of housing, especially real estate taxes. An equal number fear they will not be able to afford the costs of caring for a spouse.
- Oddly, those over 65 are generally less worried about most issues than those under 65. For those just entering their senior years, the future is apparently more daunting than it is for those who are further along on the path.